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(71) Applicant: DOW GLOBAL TECHNOLOGIES INC. [USAUS]: Washington Street, 1790 Building, Middaed, MI 48674 (US).

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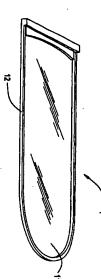
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(\$4) THE PROTECTIVE SEALABLE TRANSPARENT PLEXIBLE MEMBRANE FOR ELECTRONIC TOUCH SCREEKS



WO 03/001776 A1 monthems (1) comprised of a film (11) and a frame (12) which is suspended above a second in a protective exclosure (1). The protective scalable transparent membrane resistance and a water and that tight seal.

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PROTECTIVE SEALABLE TRANSPARENT FLEXIBLE MEMBRANE FOR ELECTRONIC TOUCH SCREENS

covers the touch screen of a personal electronic device encased in a protective enclosure The present invention relates to a protective scalable transparent membrane which

including personal and/or professional activities. A touch screen is commonly used to input today's society. These personal electronic devices have found utility in all aspects of life recorders, global positioning systems (GPS) and the like, have become common place in personal digital assistants (PDAs), gaming devices, electronic music players, voice Personal electronic devices, such as hand held computers, cell phones, pagers

or otherwise input information. operator may simply truch the display object or portion of the screen to highlight or select In most environments, and in outdoor environments in particular, personal electronic

and view data into personal electronic devices. The advantage of a touch screen is that the

devices are subject to liquids, dust, foods, greases, moisture and other contaminants display elements. transparent membrane having a liquid tight seal is needed to protect ecusitive electronic Thus, in order to operate properly in hanh environments, an enclosure with a protective exposing the personal electronic devices to harsh cleaning fluids, liquids and solutions alectronic device. Following contamination, these devices need to be cleaned, further Contamination of the touch screen can adversely affect the operability of the persons

Not only do gaskets leak with time and exposure to environmental contamination and short period of time due to the expansion and contraction of the gasket itself due to covers using gaskets expensive to manufacture. Caskets also tend to leak after a relatively effectively. The use of gashets requires multiple operations and parts which makes from gasket(s) itself. The gasket must be attached and seated properly in order to function cleaming fluids, but they also require the use of additional assembly steps and addition of the Typically, an enclosure with a front cover for a teach seroen contains one or more gaskets Prior art techniques have attempted to solve this problem in several ways

must be opened to activate the touch acreen, thus providing opportunities for exposing the such screen to potential contamination. One such example is taught in US-A-5,990,874 of motective lid. These solutions are less than desirable as they are not scaled to hiquids and Other attempts to solve the problem involve an enclosure with an openable/closeable

temperature changes in the environment.

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a personal electronic device with an attachable openable/closeable it is where there is limited equability to activate the touch acroen by depressing the protective its while closed. Unfortunately, the lid does not provide a seal to biquids and the elements and the only function through the lid is the ability to turn the personal electronic device on or off.

- Accordingly a need exists for a protective scalable transparent flexible membrane for personal electronic devices having touch across emeased in a protective enclosure, which allows activation of the truch screen through the membrane, provides an effective liquid and dust tight seal and protects the truch screen from the cavironment and elements. Further, it is desirable that the number of parts, assembly steps and hence the cost can be reduced.
- FIG. 1 is a perspective view showing the protective transparent flexible membrane
- FIG. 2 is a perspective view of the protective transperent flexible membrane and underside of the top portion of the protective enclosure for a personal electronic device that the protective transperent flexible membrane fits into.
- FIG. 3 is an exploded perspective view of the protective transparent flexible membrane, top portion of the protective exclosure, a personal electronic device and the making bottom portion of the protective exclosure.
- It is an objective of the invention to provide a protective sealable transparent flexible membrane that fits into a protective enclosure for a personal electronic device through which the touch acreen can be viewed.
- It is mother objective of the invention to provide a protective scalable transparent flexible membrane that when in place in the protective enclosure provides protection and scretch resistance for the truch screen of the personal electronic device.
- It is mother objective of the invention to provide a protective scalable transparent flexible membrane that when in place in the protective enclosure provides a liquid especially water, tight scal.
- It is mother objective of the invention to provide a protective scalable transparent flexible membrane that when in place in the protective exclusive provides a particulate especially that, tight seal.
- It is yet mother objective of the invention to provide a protective sealable transparent fluxable membrane that when in place in the protective enclosure allows for activetion of the touch screen on the personal electronic device through the membrane.

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It is still a further objective of the invention to provide a protective scalable transparent flexible mornhrame that is easy to replace.

It is still a further objective of the invention to provide a protective scalable transparent flexible membrane that is easy to manufacture.

An embodiment of the present invention is a protective scalable transparent flexible membrane comprising a film and a flurne, which fits into a protective exclosure and is suspended above a personal electronic device, said protective scalable transparent flexible membrane provides a liquid and particulate tight seal.

In a further embodiment of the present invention, the film is a flexible transparent thermoplastic, preferably a transparent thermoplastic polymethme electurer.

In a further embodiment of the present invention, the frame is a floxible thermoplastic elastomer, preferably a thermoplastic polymethane clustomer.

In a further embodiment of the present invention, the film and flume are the same or different flexible thermoplastic elastomes, proferably the same or different thermoplastic polymethans elastomes.

In a further embodiment of the invention the film is a flexible thermoplastic, preferably a thermoplastic urethane elastomer, with a hardness of between Shore 50 A to Shore 65 D.

In yet a further embodiment of the present invention, the protective scalable transparent flexible membrane comprises buttons, preferably molded-in buttons.

In yet a further embodiment of the invention, the protective scalable transparent flexible membrane comprises decorative printing.

The present invention is a protective scalable transparent floatble membrane. Said protective scalable transparent floatble membrane fits into a protective exclosure which houses a personal electronic devide naving a display and/or teach screen, such as a hand held computer, cell phone, a pager, a personal diginal assistant (PDA), a guaing device, an electronic music player, a voice recorder, a global positioning system (GFS) and the life. The protective scalable transparent flexible membrane I shown in FIG. 1 having a top side and an underside and comprising a film II and a frame 12. As shown in FIG. 2, the

protective esslable transparent flexible membrane I fits into the underside of the top portion of a protective exclosure 21 having an under side 22 and a top side 23. The protective esclable transparent flexible membrane I can fit into the topside or underside of the top portion of the protective enclosure 21. The frame 12 forms a mechanical seal with a mating

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recess 24 in the top portion of the protective enclosure 21. The top portion of the protective enclosure 21 mates with a bottom portion of the protective enclosure 31 as shown in FIG. 3 to form the protective enclosure for a personal electronic device 43.

The film 11 can be made from any tensineest or preferably transpared thermoplastic by any known film making process known in the art. Preferably, the film is made from a translacent or transparent polyamide, polyuerhane (PU), polyuerhanet or transparent polyamide, polyuerhane (PE) and polypropylezz polyrinyi chloride (PVC), polyudefin (PO), such as polyathyleze (PE) and polypropyleze (PP), polyuerylata, polyuderia, polyathorane, polyatyrene (PS), styrane and exylonitrik copolymer (SAN) or mixtures thereof. Preferably the film is a thermoplastic elastromer.

The film is must allow for scrivetion of the touch screen through it, for example by degreesing the film. Preferably the film is an elastomer. Moreover, the film has good flex faitgue resistance so as to recover its original position after being degreesed when activating the touch screen, rigid enough to maintain its position above the touch screen so as to minimize unwented acreen activation, good batthess so as to affird acratch resistance, good solvent resistance and good long term creep properties so that it will not sag over time. Preferred batchess is equal to or greater than Shore 90 A and equal to or less than Shore 95.

- Preferably the film 11 has a thickness equal to or greater than 0.001 millimeter (mm), preferably equal to or greater than 0.01 mm, more preferably equal to or greater than 0.02 mm and most preferably equal to or greater than 0.04 mm. Preferably the film 11 has a thickness equal to or less than 0.5 mm, preferably equal to or less than 0.18 mm, nore preferably equal to or less than 0.08 mm, even more preferably equal to or less than 0.08 mm, even more preferably equal to or less than 0.08 mm and most preferably equal to or less than 0.05 mm
- The frame 13 can be made from any themsoplastic elastimen which can (1) be adhered to the film and (2) make a liquid and particulate high mechanical seal when fitted into the recess 24 in the top portion of the protective enclosure 21. Suitable elastimens are described, for examiple, in Billineyer, F., Tenthook of Polymer Science, Interestations Publishers, New York, N.Y. (1965) and in Kirk-Othner Science of Chemical Technology 4th Rd John Wilson & Son. New York N.Y. (1993) Before the described of the second of t
- Ed, John Wiley & Sona, New York N.Y. (1993). Preferably the frame is made from a thermoplastic elastomer such as thermoplastic polyelefin (IPO), polyethylene, such as low density polyethylene (LDPE), ethylene and vinyl sectate copolymer (EVA), ethylene and propylene copolymers (EF), polyvinyl chloride, polyeurchane, polyeuride, polyetter and

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mixures thereof. Preferably the frame is made form a thermoplastic polyurchane, such as PSILETHANE^M 2102-75A available from The Dow Chemical Company.

The film 11 and the frame 12 may be used from different thermoplastic elastroners or the same thermoplastic elastroner. Preferably the film 11 and the frame 12 are made from thermoplastic polymethese.

The protective scalable transperent florible membrane 1 is a single part, but the film 11 and the flume 12 may be one or more distinct parts. If the film 11 and frame 13 are a single part, it must comprise a transhocant or transparent thermoplastic electroner. If the film 11 and frame 12 are two or more parts, the frame can be made by any known plastic processing technique, such as injection modifing, thermofluming, extrusion and die catting, and the like. The film 11 and the frame 12 may be attached to one another by any means known in the art to form the protective sealable transparent florible membrane, for example by a mechanical bond or physically with adherives, solvent bonding, bent staking, somit welding or insert molding. A professible method of bonding 11 to 12 is insert molding, for

The protective scalable transparent flexible membrane can vary in size, preferably it enables a view of the personal electronic device within the protective enclosure and more preferably a view of the truch screen of the personal electronic device 43 housed within the protective enclosure.

example injection molding or thermoforming the frame 12 over the film 11 to form the

protective scalable transparent flexible membrane 1.

EXAMPLE

The following example serves to demonstrate an embodiment of the invention but it not intended to limit the scope of the invention.

A thermoplastic polyurethese flexible film available as PT9200 U type S-2332, 25 natural/clear from Described having a thickness of 0.043 mm and a hardness in the range of Shore 50A to Shore 65 D is used. The fitness comprises PELLETHANH 2102-75A from the Dow Chemical company. The protective scalable transparent flexible membrane is formed by insert injection modding the frame curto the film in an injection modding machine having a mold cavity in the shape of the frame. A piece of the PT9200 U type S-2332film, larger

30 than the fiture cavity, is placed between the mold balves, the mold is closed and PELLETHANB 2102-75A is insert molded onto the PT9200 U type S-2332 film. The PELLETHANB 2102-75A is chied at a temperature between 80 to 95°C and the molding conditions are a melt temperature between 200 to 215°C with a mold temperature between

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15 to 60°C. The combined frame and film are removed from the mold and excess film is die out away to provide a protective scalable transparent flexible membrane of the desired shape.

The resulting protective scalable transparent flexible membrane is placed into a top portion of a protective exchesure such that the frame mates with a rocess in the top portion of the protective exclosure to form a water and dust tight scal. A personal electronic device is placed in the protective exclosure and the top portion of the protective exclosure is mated with the bottom portion of the protective exclosure. The resulting protective scalable transparent flexible membrane allows for activation of the truch acreen as well as good scatch resistance, water and dust resistance.

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LAIMS:

A protective scalable transparent flexible membrane comprising a film and a
finum, which fits into a protective enclosure for a personal electronic device wherein said
membrane is suspended above the personal electronic device allowing scivation of the
jersonal electronic device and provides a liquid and particulate tight seal.

- The protective scalable transparent flacible membrane of Claim 1 wherein the film comprises a transparent thermoplastic elastomer.
- 3. The protective scalable transparent florible membrane of Claim 2 wherein the film comprises a transparent thermoplastic polyurethane.

 4. The protective scalable transparent florible membrane of Claim 1 wherein
- the frame comprises a thermoplestic elestumer.

 5. The protective scalable transparent florible membrane of Claim 4 wherein the frame comprises a thermoplestic polymethene.
- The protective scalable transparent flexible membrane of Claim 4 wherein the frame has a hardness between Shore 50 A to Shore 65 D.
- The protective scalable transparent florible membrane of Claim 1 further rising molded-in buttoms.
- The protective scalable transparent flexible membrane of Claim 1 further comprising decorative printing.

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FIG. 2

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FIG. 3

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